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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 24, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "COMFORT FOR THE SLEEPING." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Show me the housekeeper who is not continually looking for ways to add comfort to her home without cost, comfort by day and comfort at night. Which reminds me of bed-making. Did you ever consider how much good bed-making may have to do with the family's comfort and disposition? The scientists say that human beings spend nearly a third of their lives in bed. And the scientists who have been studying sleep in recent years say that restful sleep has a good deal to do with happiness, health, and efficiency.

I don't need to tell you that the opposite is also true. A badly made bed may disturb your sleep just as much as pangs of conscience. You know how life often looks after spending a night between an upper sheet that pulls up from the bottom of the bed and a lower sheet that wrinkles down from the top. You know that the world doesn't seem too rosy after a night during which the breezes have caressed -- not to say pummelled -- your neck and shoulders because the covers were too short -- or after your toes have been spending an unhappy night out at the bottom of the bed.

The housekeeper who knows the value of bed comfort insists on having bedding of the right size. For the sake of comfort and protection to mattresses and blankets and the fellow who is going to sleep in the bed, a sheet should be long enough to tuck in snugly on all sides. The lower sheet should stay smoothly in position, once it's tucked in. The upper sheet should be long enough to tuck in securely at the foot of the bed as well as to fold down over the blankets at the head. When you are buying new sheets, remember to buy those that are a hundred and eight inches in length. This is the length of the sheet when it is torn off, not the length after the hems are in. Considering the shortening due to the hems and the shrinking, this will make the sheet just the right length to fit your bed and stay smoothly in position.

Blankets also need to be long enough if beds are to be comfortable and well-made. Ordinarily you want to tuck in from twelve to eighteen inches at the foot of the bed and also have the blanket reach well up over the shoulders. Check the width of your bed also when you are buying blankets. Purchase your blankets eighteen inches wider than the bed so they will tuck in at the sides. If your blankets are too short you can lengthen them by sewing a strip of unbleached muslin at one end. This extra length will tuck under the mattress and make the blanket comfortable and convenient.

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If you have ever watched a trained nurse make a bed, you know how carefully she folds the sheets and the blankets at each corner before she tucks them. Those squared or mitred corners that she makes not only look neat but they also hold securely. Then, you have probably noticed how careful she is to tuck in the lower sheet at the top of the bed and to make the upper sheet fast at the bottom. These few bed-making tricks are important for the comfort of her patient. Most good housekeepers have learned that they are also useful for beds at home.

Before long we'll be putting away much of the heavy winter bedding. Perhaps this would be a good time to mention some points about storing your bedding. Your good blankets will last many years longer if you care for them properly when you store them. This means careful repairing where necessary and good laundering or cleaning and finally careful wrapping.

Of course, blankets need frequent airing when in use, but before you store them for the summer --- if you don't launder them, be sure to let them hang outdoors until the air has had a chance to penetrate every fibre. A sunny windy day is best for either airing or washing blankets.

Here are a few suggestions about laundering blankets. First, say the experts, keep the washing and rinsing water at the same temperature. Changing temperatures tend to shrink wool. Lukewarm water is best. Then, remember to use mild neutral soap. Make a suds before you put the blankets in. Squeeze the soap suds through the blankets, but never scrub or rub or twist them. Avoid harsh alkali soap. Avoid hot water. Avoid rough handling. Hang the blankets across two lines if possible to avoid strain on the center of the blanket. If the blanket happens to have stripes that are likely to run, be sure to hang those stripes straight so the moisture will drip in a straight line to the ground. When the blankets are dry, brush them with a stiff brush to restore their fluffy nap.

Now about repairing worn or damaged blankets. Give all your blankets a "good going-over," as my grandmother used to say. That is, give them a thorough inspection. If you find edges that are frayed or worn, this is the time to repair them. A binding will take care of damaged edges. For your fine best blankets, you may want to use a satin binding. But for your other blankets a firm sateen binding will do very well. You can put the binding on with a hand or machine-turned hem, or with blanket stitch in a contrasting color. Inspect the rest of the blanket, too. Do you find any worn, thin spots that may soon be holes? Do you find any places where the threads are split or broken? If so, you can reinforce or darn them with mending wool.

When you have cleaned and mended the blankets, put them away in storage before the moths have a chance to lay any eggs in them. If the blankets are entirely free of moths, and if you pack them away in airtight containers, you don't need mothproof preparations. But just to be on the safe side you can sprinkle the blankets with naphthalene flakes or paradichlorobenzene (para-di-chlor ben-zene). Wrap your blankets in sturdy brown paper and seal every opening with gummed paper.

So much for little ways to peaceful sleep.

